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Abstract:
Jennifer is a Penn State Industrial Engineering Graduate. The document contains a brief overview of why Jennifer chose Industrial Engineering, the biggest challenges she faced in her career, and how she uses IE principles in her government role.

Alumni Spotlight: Meet Jennifer

Name: Jennifer Gildea
Location: Los Alamos, New Mexico
Current Role: Industrial Engineer

Q: Why did you choose IE as your major?
A: I've always had a passion for math and science. After graduating with my BS in mathematics, I wanted to use the practical applications of math and science to make processes more efficient. I found that industrial engineering program at Penn State aligned well with my goals. I was drawn to IE because of the wide variety of career opportunities and flexibility to work in different areas. In contrast to other engineering disciplines, I really love that IE focuses on solving people-centric problems. IEs can learn quickly and add value in any industry or position.

Q: What has been the biggest challenge you have faced in your career? How did you overcome it?
A: My first job was working at Accenture as a technology consultant. This was an excellent foundational experience for me. I gained solid analytical and communication skills to quickly grasp new concepts and communicate effectively with customers. However, I always had a desire to get back to my industrial engineering roots. Pivoting from technology consulting into a more traditional engineering role was challenging. My current role as an industrial engineer at Los Alamos National Laboratory is more hands-on, technical and is in a completely different industry. Although it has been challenging, the fundamentals I learned at Penn State and as a technology consultant have helped me tremendously. I utilize my analytical skills to learn new concepts, evaluate projects and help devise solutions. I heavily rely on my communication skills with customers and my team to understand issues and facilitate problem solving. I love being an IE because it has always given me flexibility in my career to grow in different directions and learn new things.

Q: What principles that you learned as an IE can you apply to your role in Government?
A: As an IE at Los Alamos National Laboratory, I use many of the principles I learned at Penn State. I execute process improvement projects and utilize lean six sigma methodologies to optimize processes and increase efficiencies in large organizations. I'm very fortunate to support many unique and interesting projects that support the laboratory's and nation's priorities.